
The System of Rice Intensification (SRI) as a Socio-economic and Technical Movement in India; an integrated research programme

Major Findings



Institutional variation

- There is considerable variation in how different organisations in different parts of India present SRI and promote it to farmers. One axis of difference is that between government organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other civil society organisations and networks. Differences in the promotional methods used, the intensity of trainings and follow-up visits, and the use of different channels of communication create further variation in the way different farmers understand/interpret and practice SRI in different places.



Institutional and technological 'lock-in'

- Rice farming is connected to wider institutional and technological structures that have limited flexibility. These structures constrain the adaptive space for farmers to implement recommended SRI principles. A clear example is water distribution regimes, typically a combination of social and organisational arrangements and hydraulic infrastructure, which determine or limit the time window when transplanting can be done, and restrict reduced or intermittent irrigation. Other restrictions can be imposed by labour arrangements or financial arrangements (e.g. subsidies for farm inputs, such as electricity for pumping).



Agro-ecological and livelihood patterns

- Features of landscapes and climate shape patterns in local farming practices that are not easily transformed. This is particularly evident in hill areas, where farming systems are more complex, and SRI is typically practiced on a minority of rice fields and adjusted in various ways to fit with other systems of rice cultivation, other crops, and additional income-generating activities.



Historical precursors

- The testimony of farmers from diverse locations reveals an affinity, in their understanding, between modern SRI and historical experiences with the 'Japanese method' of rice cultivation, which included line transplanting, inter cultivation and other SRI-like features, which was introduced in India prior to the Green Revolution. Historical documents confirm that cultivation practices very similar to SRI existed in locations across India and other parts of South and Southeast Asia even in earlier decades. Folk memories of the Japanese method shape farmers' understandings of SRI and can help to make SRI more familiar.

